



**Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 6663  
An Act Establishing The English Learners' Bill of Rights  
Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**

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This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy ("CCA"), a statewide private, non-profit legal organization. CCA is the largest non-profit legal organization in New England devoted exclusively to protecting and advocating on behalf of the legal rights of children. CCA provides holistic legal representation for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation, education and training, and systemic advocacy. I am a Staff Attorney on the Immigrant Children's Justice Project at CCA, where I provide direct legal services to immigrant youth and English Language Learner ("ELL") students throughout the state.

We respectfully request your **support of the passage of H.B. 6663, An Act Establishing The English Learners' Bill of Rights.**

As child advocates and attorneys, we believe that H.B. 6663 is critically important to ELL students' educational success. Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills.<sup>1</sup> Studies by the National Education Association (NEA) show that students with engaged parents achieve higher grades and test scores, develop better social skills, adapt better to school and continue into post-graduate education more often.<sup>2</sup> Connecticut school districts are mandated by the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>3</sup>, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001<sup>4</sup> and Connecticut Bilingual Statutes<sup>5</sup> to provide services to English Language Learners

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Parent Engagement in Schools," available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/parent\\_engagement.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/parent_engagement.htm)

<sup>2</sup> National Education Association (NEA). "The Eight P's of Parent Engagement," available at: [The Eight Ps of Parent Engagement | NEA](http://www.nea.org/parentengagement)

<sup>3</sup> Title VI of the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that public schools are forbidden to discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin and public schools are required to take measures to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) students can fully participate in school programs and services.

<sup>4</sup> Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that all English language learners (ELLs) receive quality instruction for learning both English and grade-level academic content.

<sup>5</sup> See Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 10-17(a) – 10-17(n)

to ensure they have access to the curriculum and are progressing academically. Raised H.B. 6663 ensures all parents of ELL students are informed of their rights, a necessary component to involvement in their children's education and thus safeguarding students' access to the curriculum.

According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, as of 2021, Connecticut's schools were home to more than 45,000 English Language Learners.<sup>6</sup> This number continues to grow and is a significant portion of the student population. It is critical that these students and their parents are informed of their access to the same educational rights as students who are native English speakers. With the high number of ELLs in our schools comes a pressing need to engage their parents in their education. An Act Establishing The English Learners' Bill of Rights requires that the rights of ELL students and the responsibilities of school districts be enumerated.

ELL students and their parents continue to be a vulnerable population in our community. Parental involvement is the backbone of a child's education, and this is especially true of ELL students who are challenged by language barriers. We as members of the state have a duty to make sure all students and their parents are served under the law. By making these rights clear and accessible to students, parents, and faculty, we will advise and enlighten all parents of their legal rights. An informed, empowered community of parents and is critical to ensuring that all of Connecticut's children can progress and thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angelique Torres". The script is cursive and fluid.

Angelique Torres

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<sup>6</sup> See Connecticut's Enrollment Report, available at: [https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard/Enrollment-Report-Legacy?language=en\\_US](https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard/Enrollment-Report-Legacy?language=en_US)